

## Live or let die?

**John David Blakley wants Congress to extend the assault rifle ban**

**Eric Brown says the Clinton Gun Ban should not be reloaded**



JOHN DAVID BLAKLEY

In 1994, the federal assault weapons ban prohibiting the sale of semi-automatic assault weapons was signed into law as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. Its aim was to take 19 of the deadliest assault weapons off the streets — guns not seen in any hunting or Olympic event — but 19 of the deadliest assault weapons, along with duplicates of the weapons and ammunition clips which hold more than 10 rounds. In 10 days, the ban, which has been successful in its objective, will expire, and the terror these weapons bring will have the opportunity to find its way back to the streets.

On the campaign trail in 2000, President Bush promised to renew the ban. This is not surprising, since 70 percent of Americans support the banning of assault weapons (including 60 percent of gun owners) according to The Chicago Sun-Times. Though it may be the smart thing to do — politically and rationally — The Chicago Sun-Times reported that the President has not urged House Speaker Dennis Hastert to renew the ban.

While one can only hope the President gives in to the preference of the majority of Americans and common sense, the clock is ticking and any hope of action from the president is unlikely, as expiration of the assault weapons ban is nearly a week away.

Although the ban will not end all gun violence in the United States, it is a step in the right direction. According to a report by the Brady Campaign (an organization named after Jim Brady, Ronald Reagan's press secretary who, along with President Reagan, was shot by John Hinckley in 1981) and the Million Mom March, "within the category of inmates who used guns to commit crimes, semiautomatic assault weapons were actually used in 6.8 percent of state prosecutions and 9.3 percent of federal prosecutions."

Despite these facts, organizations such as the National Rifle Association claim that assault weapons do not play a significant role in gun violence within the United States and that the assault weapons ban has been ineffective.

On the contrary, a study by the U.S. Department of Justice stated that the ban had clear effects on the gun market and led to semiautomatic assault weapons "becoming less accessible to criminals because there was at least a short-term decrease in criminal use of the banned weapons." According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the ban has resulted in a 66-percent drop in the rate in which assault weapons are used in gun-related crimes.

Contrary to further empty rhetoric from the NRA, the ban is not an attempt to curtail citizens' Second Amendment rights. It is a successful attempt to relieve the American public of the dangers of military-style assault weapons that have no practical purpose beyond violent turmoil.

In this year's budget, the White House proposed cutting federal funding for 88,000 policemen. Along with the layoffs, many large cities (where the terrorists aim) have endured due to tight budgets.

Gang-related murders rose 40 percent between 2000 and 2002, and statistics show the numbers remain high. Along with firefighters, police officers are a vital part of a first response team in the event of a terrorist attack. The idea of taking police officers off the streets, while allowing weapons that are manufactured with the intent of killing as many people as possible as quickly as possible, back on the streets is mind-boggling. While we fight for security in the streets of Iraq and Afghanistan, we cannot afford to forfeit security at home in such a discretionary fashion.

With the United States leading the world in gun deaths (30,000 average deaths annually in the past decade), now is not the time to regress in gun control policy, especially concerning weapons as dangerous as those prescribed by the assault rifle ban. If Bush does not act soon, he may find weapons of mass destruction — and they will not be in a foreign land, but on the streets of our nation.

*John David Blakley is a junior political science major.*



ERIC BROWN

On Sept. 13, 10 years of oppression of the American people by the federal government will end when Title XI of the Federal Violent Crime Control Act of 1994, more commonly known as the Clinton Gun Ban, will expire. If Congress looks at the facts, it will find the only sensible option is letting this law die.

This provision banned the manufacture and import of guns defined by Congress as assault weapons. These firearms were categorized by cosmetic and ergonomic features that present a military-like appearance but have no effect on lethality. The act also bans high-capacity magazines.

When President Clinton signed this bill into law, he stated, "I don't believe that everybody in America needs to be able to buy a semi-automatic or fully-automatic weapon, built only for the purpose of killing people, in order to protect the right of Americans to hunt and practice marksmanship and to be secure."

In the process of signing this bill into law and making this statement, he forgot to do his research. If he had, he would have known that not everybody in America can buy a firearm — felons, drug addicts, illegal aliens and fugitives from justice cannot. Also, ownership of fully-automatic firearms has been heavily regulated by the Federal Firearms Act since 1934. And semi-automatic firearms, which have been around for more than a century, are used by millions of Americans for hunting, self-defense, recreational target shooting and in formal marksmanship competitions such as the Olympics.

What has the Clinton Gun Ban actually done

to curb crime? Not much, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report National Crime Victimization Survey. Between 1993 and 2001, firearms were used in only 10 percent of all violent crimes committed. For this 10 percent, the majority of firearms used were handguns, not the banned assault rifles. As with most other gun control laws, all this law did was punish law-abiding citizens who were merely exercising their Second Amendment rights.

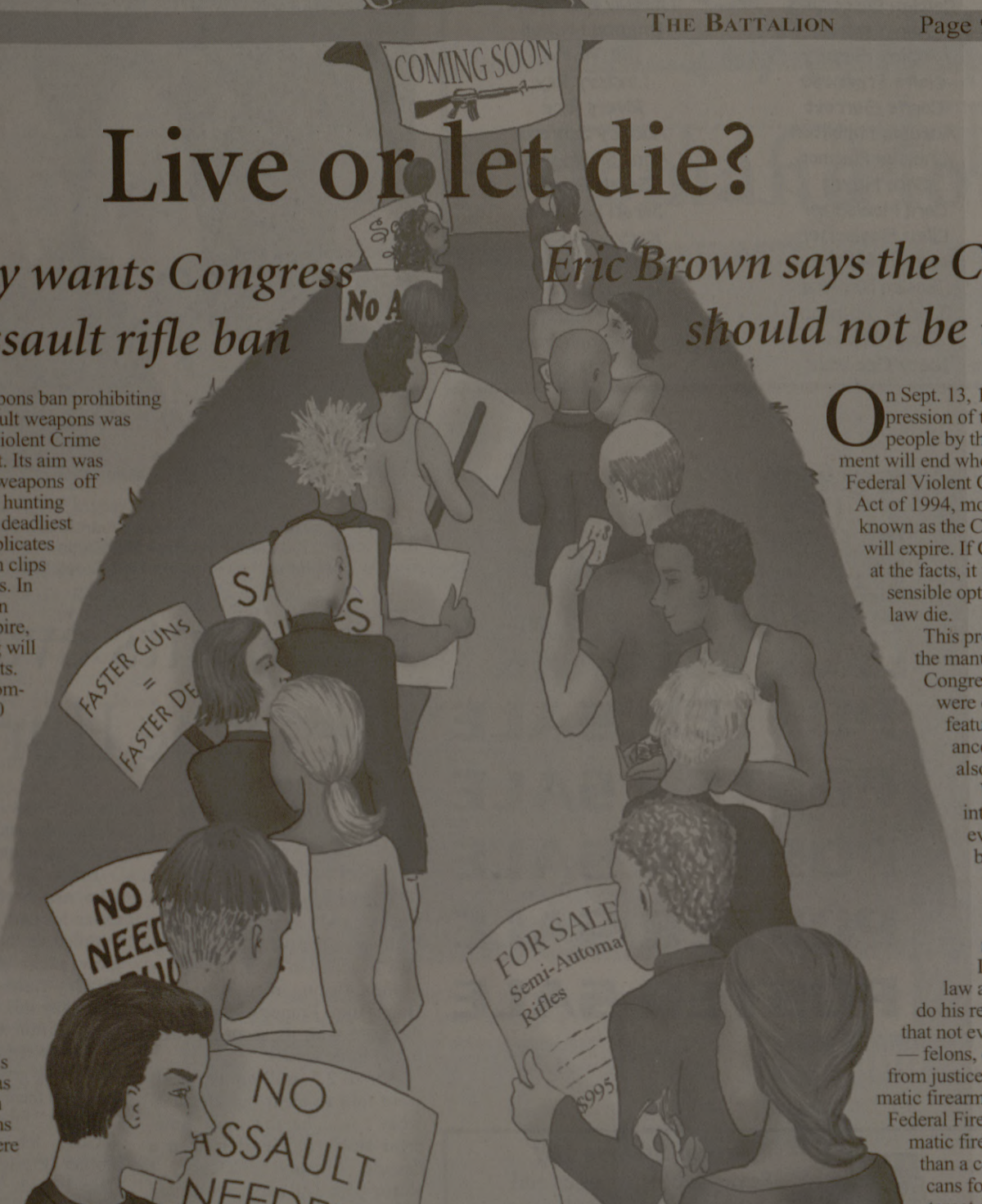
Most gun control laws actually increase the crime rate because as firearms are confiscated from law-abiding citizens. The criminals are still getting them and know that their victim now has no way to defend himself. This has been the trend in England and Australia where guns are outlawed.

In 1997, when England banned all handguns, the crime rate skyrocketed to its highest in the 100 years records started being kept. According to BBC News, the murder rate rose 22 percent during the first eight months of the law, as law abiding citizens no longer had a way to defend themselves on the street. Overall, handgun crime in the United Kingdom rose by 40 percent in the two years after it passed its draconian gun ban.

The Clinton Gun Ban was based on information from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and was drastically misconstrued by its sponsors; it was repealed in less than two years by the House of Representatives. Also, during that same time frame, 20 Democrats who voted in favor of the gun ban lost their seats in Congress after their constituents found the information on which the bill was based.

Congress should look at other countries and learn from their mistakes. Congress should look at the Second Amendment and not infringe upon it.

*Eric Brown is a student of post baccalaureate studies in education.*



BRANDI DUNN • THE BATTALION

### MAILCALL

#### Stigmatized groups can be compared

*In response to Chelsea Sledge's Sept. 1 article:*

Like many Greeks I was very disappointed to hear a few weeks ago that the Greek Block at Kyle Field was turned down by the SBP for the upcoming football season (after already being promised).

As a member of a sorority and an officer on the Collegiate Panhellenic Council, I find myself constantly defending Greek life. Common accusations are that Greeks are "2 percenters" and do not care about traditions at Texas A&M. However, when we try to show our spirit in a large force we are rejected. It is a strange stereotype since the motto of Aggie Greeks is, "Aggies First."

Although the Corps is the first and oldest organization at A&M, the Greek system started long before 1876. When Greeks finally arrived at this campus; they brought with them many traditions that long outlive the Corp and this school.

Greek Life has more members than the Corps, holds a higher grade point ratio than the average student and Greeks contributed more than \$50,000 to this community.

My advice to future student leaders is to follow through with your promises and show your constituents the respect they deserve. I am glad that A&M has an organization like the Corps to represent the past at this school; it's part of what makes this school special. However, an institution shouldn't forget the organizations that make up a campus today.

*Mary Baugh  
Class of 2006*

#### Greeks aren't special, don't deserve seats

I do not intend to challenge the "values" of our various fraternities and sororities, but any student need go no further than the MSC Open House to see the vast number of student organizations on campus that are available to the student body. Are the various student organizations through the MSC somehow less important than the Greeks? Do they somehow make less of a contribution to the student body and community? Are the various Freshmen leadership organizations or community service programs on campus not fully deserving of block seating?

If the Greeks are deserving of such seating, then so is a great number of other organizations. It discourages me to see a movement to further segregate the Greeks as a separate entity, rather than their incorporation to something that is bigger than any fraternity, sorority or campus organization; the fightin' Texas Aggie Twelfth Man.

This is not about values or community impact, and 3,000 seats on first deck designated for Greeks is extreme. Corps members displace a good portion of first deck seats from battle-tested seniors.

No one is trying to discourage Greeks from sitting together, but to say that they are any more deserving than any other student organization is detestable. Do a group pull and sit on third deck like every other organization does. If it works for them, it should work for you.

*Bill Black  
Class of 2005*

#### Jack flip-flopped on football seating

Recently, Student Body President Jack Hildebrand showed his true colors by ditching a position he supported during the campaigns.

When it comes to his decision to veto the plan for a Greek section at football games, it matters less that Jack chose not to support the plan, but rather that he flip-flopped on the issue, speaking for it when he was trying to get elected, then voting against it once in office.

This is a troubling sign for the student body, because no one can trust a leader who agrees with you one day, and ditches you the next.

I, for one, am tired of student leaders claiming to want to work for the students during campaign season and then catering to their resumes the day they get into office.

It's time A&M had moral leaders who will stand by their convictions and keep their word.

*Robert Edmonson  
Class of 2007*

#### Do benefitting work for the right reasons

I am sure that Texas A&M fraternities hold the very highest of morals and values. That is why I am sure they will understand that they should not unfairly be given a block of 3,000 seats for the

first deck for every home game.

Mr. Boben argues that because they contribute to A&M then they should have reserved seats. Every organization contributes to the University, but you cannot give every deserving organization their own block of seats. It just isn't feasible. I am not sure why Josh and his brethren believe that their contributions and values should be rewarded above everyone else's. Apparently Josh believes he needs to be compensated for his time spent doing "good work." I hope in the future, he and his organization will do good work for good work's sake.

*Nicholas Scott  
Class of 2004*

#### For Corps benefits, become a cadet

While I agree that fraternities and sororities do contribute to the community surrounding the University, they do little on campus that makes them stand out from the rest of the student population. If the Greeks want to be on equal footing with the Corps in respect to block seating, they must show they deserve it.

To the Greeks: Are you willing to wear a uniform to class? Are you ready to dedicate four years of your life to upholding the traditions (regardless of perceived relevance) of this University? Are you willing to accept the responsibility of making up only a small percentage of the student population while bearing 90

percent of the visibility? If you are willing to do these things, then join the Corps and you can have all the block seating you can stand (no pun intended).

If not, then just go to the games like everyone else, pull your tickets together, and don't be bitter about it.

*Paul Sims  
Class of 2006*

#### Readership Program uses student fees

*In response to Jibran Najimi's Sept. 2 article:*

The recent Battalion news article regarding the return of the Collegiate Newspaper Readership Program to Texas A&M quotes SGA Executive Vice-President Chris Diem as saying that no student service fees were used to fund this program. This statement is inaccurate.

A recent memo (available at www.sgawatch.com) from Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs Tom Reber, states that the \$250,000 cost of the newspaper program is coming from the student service fee reserve fund that is administered by the Division of Student Affairs. While the newspaper program may not be an annual budgeted student service fee expenditure, to say that student service fees do not pay for the program is a gross misrepresentation of fact.

*Mark McCaig  
Class of 2005  
President, Aggie Watch*